

Set a Purpose

A man participates in an **experiment**.
Find out what happens.

There was no way out.

The walls of his cell were built of thick cement blocks. The huge door was made of steel. The floor and ceiling were made of concrete, and there were no windows. The only light came from a light bulb that was covered by a metal shield.

There was no way out, or so it seemed to him.

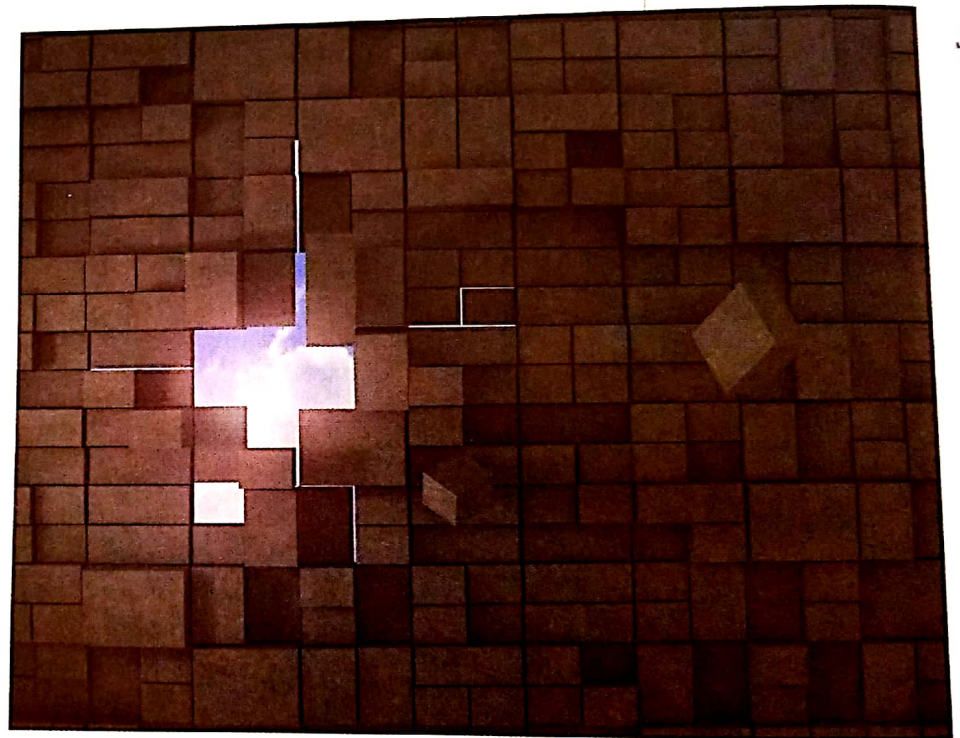
He had **volunteered** to be part of a scientific experiment and had been put in the cell to test the **cleverness** of the human mind. The cell was empty, and he was not allowed to take anything into it. But he had been told that there was one way to **escape** from the cell, and he had three hours to find it. **1**

He began with the door. It stood before him, huge and gray. The three large hinges on the door were **riveted into** the wall and could not be removed. The door itself seemed too big for the small cell, and for a minute he wondered if it had been put up first and the rest of the cell built around it.

1 Plot and Setting

This three-hour time period is part of the setting. How does it affect the plot?

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▲ Critical Viewing: Setting What is the setting of this work of art? How does it relate to the story?

Key Vocabulary

experiment *n.*, a test or trial to learn about something

escape *v.*, to get free

In Other Words

volunteered agreed, offered

cleverness smartness, intelligence

riveted into attached to, fastened to

Finally he turned away from the door and looked around. He tried pushing against the cement blocks to see if any of them were loose. He searched the floor for a **trap door**. Then he glanced up at the ceiling. The shield! The shield around the light bulb! His mind raced. The metal shield could be used as a tool—the tool he needed! He had found the way to escape! 2

He moved under the shield and looked closely at it. One good strong pull would free it, he decided. He reached up, grabbed hold of it, and pulled. But the shield stayed attached to the ceiling. He grabbed the shield again, twisting it as he pulled. He felt it rip free, and he fell to the floor **clutching** his treasure.

He had found the way to escape!

The shield was shaped like a cone and had been fastened to the ceiling by three long metal **prongs**. These prongs were sharp. But they were not strong enough to cut through steel or concrete or cement.

He felt a hopelessness creep over him. He could find no use for the shield as a tool. The shield was not what he needed to get out.

Then he had a brilliant idea. True, the metal prongs of the shield could not cut through the steel door or the concrete floor or the cement blocks in the wall. But the prongs might be strong enough to dig out the **mortar** that held the cement blocks in place. He pulled off one of the prongs and scraped hard at the mortar. The mortar crumbled into powder. His idea worked! If he removed enough mortar, he could loosen a couple of the cement blocks, then push them out, and escape!

2 Plot/Predict

What do you think will happen next? Record your prediction on your chart. Read on to see how logical your prediction is.

In Other Words

trap door hidden door that covered an opening

clutching holding

prongs strips with pointed ends

mortar building material



Monitor Comprehension

Summarize

What does the man need to do? What has he decided to do?

Predict

The man has a plan. Will it work?

He selected two blocks near the door and set to work. The prong dug into the mortar and sent it flying out in a steady stream. The prong was just what he had needed. Now he was sure he would escape. But his hand made a sudden careless twist, and the metal prong broke into two useless pieces.

At first a wave of anger **stunned** him. Then he remembered that the shield had two more prongs. He pulled off another prong and went back to work. He decided he must be more careful—nothing must go wrong. There was still plenty of time left.

Soon he had chipped out four inches of mortar. **3** But the **jagged** edges of the cement blocks had torn the skin off his knuckles. His hands were bleeding from a dozen burning cuts. His back and shoulders hurt from the **strain** of working in one position. The mortar dust blew into his eyes and down his throat. The work dragged on, slower and slower.

Suddenly the second prong broke.

For a minute he welcomed the excuse to stop working. But the thought of **failure** sent him back into action. He pulled off the third and last prong and went to work again. He was a man who did not like to lose—he had to win.

The work dragged on. He **became numb** to the pain in his hands, to the **ache** in his shoulders. His fingers moved **blindly**, and his attack against the mortar grew weaker and weaker.

At last he broke through. He had dug out enough mortar so that now he could see light between the cement blocks. **4**

3 Access Vocabulary
What do you think *chipped out* means? Think about what the man is doing.

4 Plot/Predict
What do you think will happen next? Record your thinking in your chart. Why do you think this will happen?

Key Vocabulary

failure *n.*, a bad result

In Other Words

stunned stopped

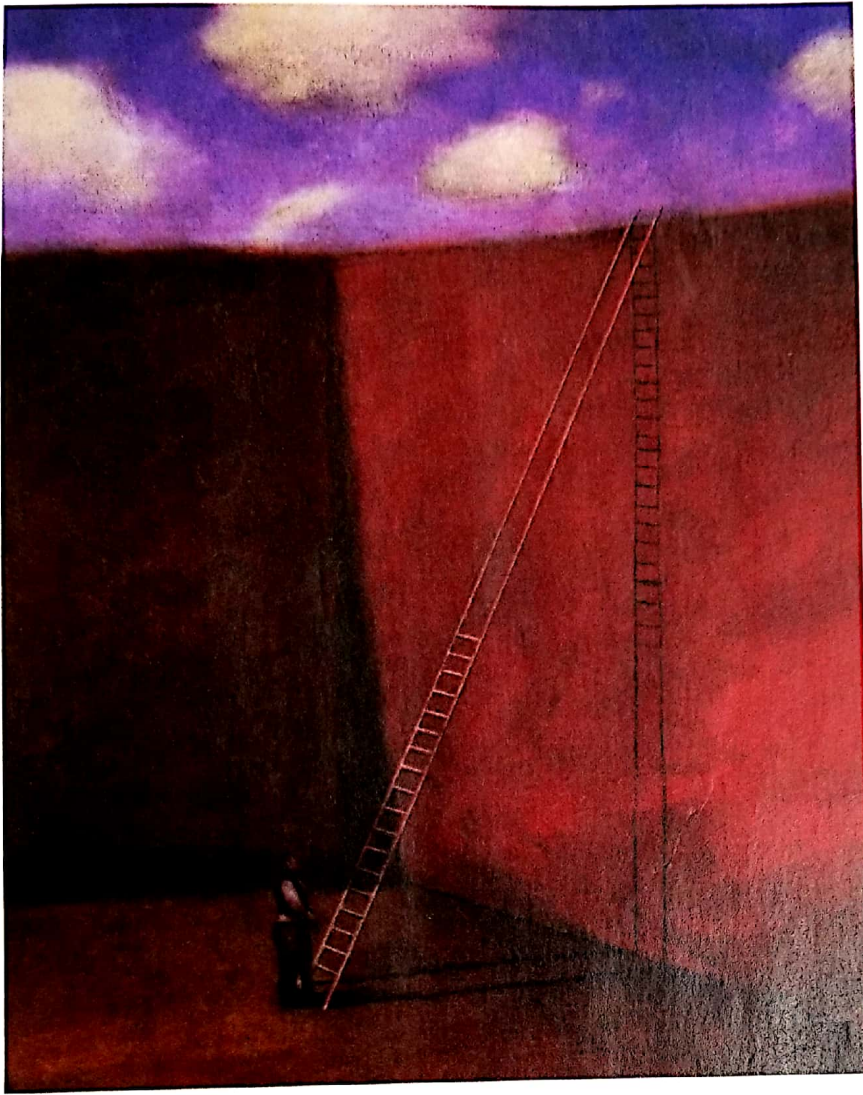
jagged rough

strain difficulty

became numb did not pay attention

ache pain

blindly without his control



Critical Viewing:
Effect How do you think the person in this painting feels? What in the painting makes you think that?

With a spurt of new energy he chipped away at the rest of the mortar. Of course there was a way out. He had found it, hadn't he? He had proved that a clever mind could solve any problem. That's how he had done it—with his own cleverness.

At that instant the third prong snapped in his hand.

He stared at the useless pieces. Then in a **blind rage** he slammed his fist against the wall.

In Other Words

blind rage very angry way



Monitor Comprehension

Retell

The man tries his plan. What happens?

How can he escape?

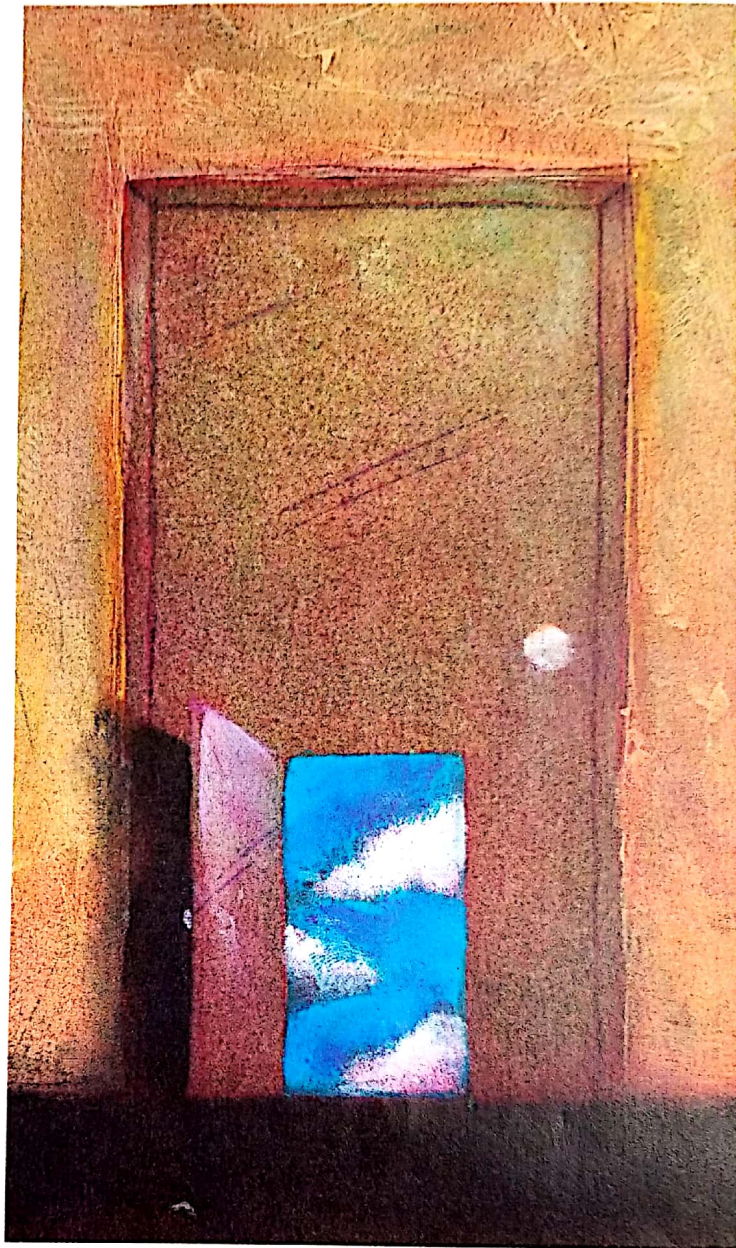
Behind him the door of the cell opened slowly. His time had run out. His part of the experiment was over.

He was not allowed to talk about the experiment or about his plan of escape. However, he was sure that he could have escaped. He was convinced that he almost had.

Actually, he had not even come close.

The shield had been put around the light bulb only as a shade for the light. The metal prongs were not meant to be used as a tool.

The man had been clever, but he had let his cleverness **sidetrack him**. If he had not been so quick to use the shield as a tool, if he had not spent all his time chipping out



▲ Critical Viewing: Plot What do you think happened in this painting? Explain how this painting relates to the experiment.

In Other Words

sidetrack him keep him from finding the answer, distract him

the mortar, and if he had not stopped searching the cell, he might have found the real way out. He might have discovered that he could have left the cell as easily as he had entered.

For the huge door had never been locked. 5 ❖

5 Plot and Setting

What did you assume, or suppose, about the setting? Why did you make that assumption?

ANALYZE The Experiment

- 1. Confirm Prediction** What was the best way to **escape** from the cell?
- 2. Vocabulary** How did the man's **belief** affect his ability to escape from the cell? Discuss with a partner.
- 3. Analyze Literature: Plot and Setting** Work with a partner to list the major plot events in "The Experiment." After you finish, discuss the connection between the plot and the setting.

1.	The man volunteers for an experiment.
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

- 4. Reading Strategy Preview and Predict** Review the **Prediction Chart** you started on page 9. What predictions did you make that were logical? Explain how you made those predictions.

Return to the Text

Reread and Write Imagine that you are the man in the **experiment**. Write a description of how beliefs influenced your actions. Go back into the text to find **evidence**, or supporting details, to support what you say.

Key Vocabulary

belief *n.*, something you think is true

evidence *n.*, proof that something is true

EQ What Influences How You Act?

Reading

Critical Thinking

- Analyze** Look again at the **Anticipation Guide** on page 8. Do you want to change any of your responses? Discuss your thinking with a group.
- Compare** In "The Experiment," think about how the man's **belief** influenced his actions. Compare it to how a belief in a **superstition** can influence someone's actions.
- Interpret** Which superstition do you think is most powerful? Why?
- Speculate** Will the main character in "The Experiment" continue to wonder how he could have **escaped**? Do you think he will ever realize that the door was unlocked? Explain your answer.
- Evaluate** How do beliefs affect people's behavior? Can they be helpful? Explain.

Writing

Write About Literature

Opinion Statement Agree or disagree with this statement: "People make up superstitions when they want to feel in control of something they don't understand." Use examples from both texts to support your response.

Vocabulary

Key Vocabulary Review

Oral Review Work with a partner. Use these words to complete the paragraph.

beliefs **experiment** **mistaken**
escape **failure** **superstition**
evidence **misfortune**

My friend Dan has many (1) that I don't agree with. When he first saw my new kitten, Midnight, he yelled, "Keep it away! Black cats cause (2). They are bad luck." I had never seen any (3) or proof of that, so I decided to do an (4). I would test Dan's silly (5) by watching what happened when Midnight went near people. At first, Midnight wouldn't cooperate, and I thought the whole thing was going to be a (6). Soon, however, he started walking up to people who passed our front yard. Nobody tried to run away or (7)! Nothing bad happened! Dan was (8) about black cats.

Writing Application Think of another example of how a person's belief in a superstition could affect how the person acts. Write a paragraph about it. Use at least four Key Vocabulary words.

Fluency

Read with Ease: Expression

Assess your reading fluency with the passage in the Reading Handbook, p. 637. Then complete the self-check below.

- I read **a.** great **b.** OK **c.** not very well
- What I did best in my reading was _____.
- My partner read with emotion. The reading was interesting to listen to. **a.** yes **b.** not yet